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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE IMAGE OF THE CAVE IN FIFTH CENTURY GREEK TRAGEDY

by

SANDRA JEAN DUANE



A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF ARTS

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Robert Schind...

Supervisor

[Signature]

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ABSTRACT

The image of the cave in fifth century Greek tragedy has received little attention. This thesis attempts to place the cave in the framework of imagery in three fifth century tragedians: Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The use of the cave by each of these playwrights is examined and a comparative analysis is then drawn. The cave is used sparingly in Aeschylus; chapter two deals with this infrequency and examines reasons for it. Sophocles includes caves in several of his plays; the use of the cave in Antigone and Philoctetes is discussed in some detail in chapter three. In Euripides, the cave occurs in almost every one of his plays; Ion is discussed in some detail in chapter four. Imagery can be decorative or functional; the cave in the three plays examined is a functional image which develops into a symbol. In its other occurrences, the cave simply represents a primitive dwelling and does not achieve additional significance.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The image of the cave in fifth century Greek tragedy has been largely ignored. Though its frequency increases from the time of Aeschylus, who uses the image sparingly, to that of Euripides, who includes the cave in almost all of his plays, little interpretive study has been done on the cave.¹ Discussion has concentrated instead on the staging of the individual plays - how the cave was depicted in the traditional Greek theatre and how the actors worked with it to enhance the story found in the text. Foremost in this group is a monograph by Werner Jöbst² in which he discusses the depiction of caves in certain plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, but only in relation to stage convention. By looking at the literary evidence, as well as the artistic evidence as found on vase paintings of the period, he establishes the development of the conventions that were used to illustrate caves in the fifth century Greek theatre. A.M. Dale has also examined the use of the cave as a scenic convention³, concentrating on the Philoctetes of Sophocles and Euripides' satyr play, the Cyclops. She is mainly concerned with the depiction of the cave in these plays and also with the movement of the actors around the stage setting. It is not my intent to consider possible depictions of the cave on stage; this work will deal only with the cave as an image in the plays and in

particular, with the use of the cave as imagery of setting. The purpose of the thesis will be to determine whether the image of the cave in fifth century Greek tragedy is merely decorative or whether it has some function by which it enhances the plot.

It is important at the outset to establish clearly a definition of both "image" and "symbol". An image is defined as "the reproduction in the mind of a sensation produced by a physical perception."⁴ In this thesis, a concept will be defined as an image if the idea has a connotation beyond that of the simple representation of the idea. Specifically, whenever the cave evokes a response for the audience suggesting some significance beyond that of setting, it will be defined as an image. The basic assumption is that repetitions of images are significant: "If the same image recurs in different contexts, then it serves to link those contexts in significant ways"⁵ A symbol, on the other hand, "refers to something (in the work) as standing for something else (in the work)"⁶ and it "unites an image (the analogy) and the idea or conception (the subject) which that image suggests or evokes."⁷ Thus, an image becomes a symbol if "the image is presented in such a way as to . . . encourage a more than literal interpretation . . . since it is made into something more by virtue of the speaker's reactions to it . . .".⁸ Where caves appear in a play repeatedly and seem to assume a greater significance than that of an image, they

will be closely examined. It must be pointed out, however, that this study of the cave is a comparative study between Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides; it is not intended to be an exhaustive study of all instances of caves in Greek tragedy. The purpose is not to show the significance of the cave for any one tragedian, but to illustrate how each tragedian has used the cave in comparison to the others. To facilitate the study of the cave imagery, the approach of such studies as those of Goheen, Lanahan and Harsh will be followed⁹; that is, the image will be examined in the context of each individual play, and its significance determined through a study of its relation to plot and characterization.

Before beginning a study of the cave in Greek tragedy, it is necessary to consider the occurrences previous to the fifth century B.C. The cave has a long tradition in Greek mythology. Several Greek gods are associated with caves, including Pan, Hephaistos, and Demeter. For example, Pausanias mentions the cave sanctuary of Demeter and the myth associated with this cave.¹⁰ But, in most instances, these caves have become familiar through epic and through lyric poetry. The most well known caves in early Greek literature - those of Calypso and the Cyclops - occur in the Odyssey, Books 5 and 9. The two characters who live in these caves are both unusual, but almost a complete antithesis of each other. Calypso is a goddess who wishes to keep Odysseus

with her and so provides him with all he might want in her cave by the ocean. The Cyclops also wishes to detain Odysseus from his journey, but for quite a different reason - to supply the giant with a food supply. The description of the caves are also quite different; the cave of Calypso is surrounded by beautiful woods and is a warm and friendly place (5.60ff.). The Cyclops, on the other hand, lives very primitively in a mountain cave with his sheep as companions. In both instances, however, the cave is associated with a struggle on the part of Odysseus; he must escape from the restrictiveness of the environments which the caves provide in order to continue on his journey home. The desolation of these two dwellings and their isolation from civilization is emphasized because they are caves, a setting associated with primitiveness and uncivilized habitation.

There are several other examples of caves in epic. These include such caves as that of the daughters of Nereus and the one belonging to Hephaistos in the Iliad. In Hesiod's Theogony, there are few examples of caves; they are usually associated with places far removed from civilization, places of secrecy.¹¹

In lyric poetry, there are a few isolated instances of caves. In Pindar, Nemean 3.53f., the cave of Chiron is mentioned as the place where Jason was educated. This cave is also mentioned in Pythian 4.103. The tradition of Chiron

brings to the cave a sense of sophistication, for although he is a primitive creature, his association as a teacher enhances the surroundings.

It is in tragedy that the cave becomes more frequently used as an important image of setting. The cave is an infrequent image in Aeschylus, occurring only six times, but it is consistent in its depiction as a primitive dwelling. It is in Sophocles and Euripides, however, that the cave achieves a greater status, specifically in the three plays which will be examined in this thesis; the cave in these plays takes on additional meaning beyond that of simple dwelling and has a far greater impact on the action of the plays and on the way in which the characters react to the cave and to each other. In Antigone, the cave has the dual role of bridal chamber and tomb; in Philoctetes, the cave has been the only shelter for the hero for ten years and is a source of comfort to him. In Ion, the cave is associated with the actions which are the cause of Creusa's suffering and resentment through the years. These three plays will be discussed in detail in this thesis.

INTRODUCTION

¹Studies on symbolism tend to concentrate on the more visible symbols, such as the robe in Agamemnon or the bow in Philoctetes. For example, C. Segal ("Visual symbolism and visual effects in Sophocles", CW 74 (1980), pp.125-142) discusses four symbols in Sophocles, yet passes over the cave in Philoctetes, though he does mention it (page 126). S. Barlow (The Imagery of Euripides, 1971), in her discussion of the Ion play, mentions the broom which Ion uses as being an important symbol, yet she ignores the cave (page 47).

²"Die Höhle im griechischen Theater des 5. und 4. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.", (1970) österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil-Hist. Klasse, Sitzungsberichte, Bd. 268, Abhandlung 2. Jöbst discusses the cave in the theatre of the fifth century, making use of both literary and artistic evidence. The first half of his monograph is devoted to a discussion, by individual play, of the depiction of the cave as seen from a production point of view. The second half deals with various reproductions of caves on vases, with black and white photographs of some of the more obvious examples. He does not supply a complete list of plays in which the cave would have been a feature of the staging, but rather chooses to discuss certain plays from each author (both tragedy and comedy), with a two to three page analysis of each. Since I am not dealing with the depiction of the cave on the stage as part of the production process, I have not included Jöbst's work in the body of my thesis.

³A.M. Dale, "Seen and unseen on the Greek stage: a study in scenic conventions", Wiener Studien 69 (1956), pp. 96-106. As is evident from the title of this work, Dale deals with the depiction of various "props" on the Greek stage. In the case of the cave, she deals only with the cave of the Philoctetes, providing several reasons for her interpretation of how the cave would have appeared to the Greek audience. Again, this discussion, while interesting for its inclusion of the cave, does not add any insight on the topic of the cave as a literary symbol.

⁴The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, A. Preminger, editor (1974), Princeton University Press, page 363.

⁵Poetry and Poetics, page 367.

⁶Poetry and Poetics, page 835.

⁷Poetry and Poetics, page 833.

⁸Poetry and Poetics, page 833. A cautionary note must be set forth. Quoting Burke (Attitudes towards History), A. Preminger in Poetry and Poetics states: "One cannot long discuss imagery . . . without sliding into symbolism. The poet's images are organized with relation to one another by reason of their symbolic kinships. We shift from the image of an object to its symbolism as soon as we consider it, not in itself alone, but as a function in a texture of relationships." (page 367). An attempt will be made in this thesis to keep image and symbol separate, unless it can be shown that the image of the cave in the plays discussed develops into a symbol through its function in the play.

⁹These three studies are similar in purpose and approach to the current topic. R.F. Goheen ("Aspects of dramatic symbolism: 3 studies in the Oresteia", AJPh 76 (1955), pp. 113-137) discusses the robe in Aeschylus' Agamemnon, progressing from the words describing the robe in the play to the importance of the visual appearance of the symbol and, finally, to its significance to an interpretation of the play. He then looks at uses of the same vocabulary in other plays and compares the motif of the robe in Agamemnon to similar motifs in other plays of Aeschylus. W.F. Lanahan ("Levels of symbolism in the red carpet scene of Agamemnon", CB 51-52 (1974-76), pp. 24-27) has also examined the symbol of the robe and he discusses various levels of symbolism which are suggested by the use and appearance of the robe. P. Harsh ("The role of the bow in the 'Philoctetes'", AJPh 81 (1960), pp. 408-414) has looked at the bow in Sophocles' Philoctetes and has assessed its importance in relation to character development and development of plot. Other studies such as J. Peradotto's "Some patterns of nature imagery in the Oresteia", AJPh 85 (1964), pp. 378-393 have looked at the wide range of imagery which falls into different categories and the metamorphosis of the imagery through the action of the different plays. All these studies will provide a framework which I can follow in looking at the symbol of the cave in Greek tragedy.

¹⁰W. Burkert, Structure and History in Greek Mythology and Ritual (1979), page 125f. Burkert discusses the myth and the attendant sacrifices as told by Pausanias.

¹¹The following is a list of the occurrences of the cave in the Iliad and the Theogony:

Iliad: 2.88; 4.279; 13.32; 18.50; 18.65; 18.402; 24.83.

Theogony: 297; 301; 483.

There are no instances of words to describe a cave proper in Works and Days; there are a few occurrences of πέτρα perhaps used of caves (eg. 533; 589).

II. AESCHYLUS

Aeschylus' tragedies abound in imagery; some of the better known images include birds of prey in Suppliants, the yoke in Persians and the ship in the storm image in Seven against Thebes. B.H. Fowler suggests, for the Agamemnon alone, ten different images, ranging from the robe to disease.¹ All of Aeschylus' plays have been studied with respect to their imagery and their symbolism. While the methods of analysis and the images which are discussed, as well as the conclusions which are reached, vary from scholar to scholar, it is clear that Aeschylus skillfully used imagery and symbolism in all his plays to emphasize some important aspects of the action of the individual play.²

The image of the cave in Aeschylus, however, is never discussed because it occurs infrequently in this tragedian. Caves occur only six times and in only two of his plays: Eumenides and Prometheus Bound.³ There are numerous examples of rocks in the plays of Aeschylus but these are not caves proper. N.G.L. Hammond postulates that there was an outcropping of rock in the theatre in Athens which prompted Aeschylus to include such a setting in almost all of his plays.⁴ This rock is never portrayed as hollow (i.e. a cave) but varies from the acropolis of the Seven against Thebes to the burial mound of Darius in Persians. It is also the rock to which Prometheus is attached in Prometheus Bound.

Caves in Aeschylus are primitive, associated with the wild. They range from the cave of the Oceanids deep beneath the sea to the prison which houses the monster Typho after his battle with Zeus. Perhaps the most important image of the cave is that of the caves of mankind in Prometheus Bound, for they illustrate the importance of Prometheus' gifts and the impact on mankind of these gifts. There are not sufficient examples to draw a conclusion on the significance of the cave image in Aeschylus; since this tragedian most often dealt with urban themes in the plays which are extant, he would have little use for the image of the cave in these plays.

There are two caves mentioned in Eumenides. The first occurs in the prologue at line 23.⁵ The Pythia is setting the tone for the play by giving a brief history of the shrine of Apollo at Delphi in a prayer to the gods. The cave is designated as sacred to the gods: "And I worship the nymphs, where there is the Corycian hollow rock, loved by birds, haunt of the gods. Bromius, of whom I am ever mindful, dwells in that place, and from there, the god armed and led his Bacchantes and devised a fate for Pentheus similar to that of a hare." (22-26).⁶ Bacchus governs this cave; it is a place which nymphs inhabit, it is hallowed, loved by birds. The ambiance of the cave is of joy and happiness. Yet it is also associated with more sombre circumstances, for it is the starting place for the hunt for Pentheus by the Bacchantes, a hunt which ended in his death.

The cave in this instance, therefore, is a primitive site, inhabited by natural forces but also associated with their darker side.

The second cave image in Eumenides occurs at line 193: "Your whole manner shows your form; it is reasonable that such as you inhabit the cave of a bloodthirsty lion, and that you not pollute shrines such as the one nearby with your defilement." (192-195). The cave - of a lion described as blood drinking - appears in a deprecation of the Furies by Apollo. The Furies have infested his shrine and the god remarks that they are more suited to dwell in a cave that reeks of blood than in a religious sanctuary. The bloodthirsty character of the lion not only emphasizes the uncivilized nature of the Furies, it also gives to the cave a connotation of cruelty and ferocity. The Furies ought to inhabit a place which is not civilized, but suited to creatures of the wild. Similar to the image of 22ff., this cave is associated with nature in its wildness, but in this instance, it is a wildness which also gives the impression of ferocity. The cave is seen as a home suitable for a wild beast, but the attribute of "bloodthirsty" adds a sinister aspect to the inhabitant of the cave. In both cases, then, the perception of the cave is twofold - as shelter for wild creatures - the nymphs and the lion - and as a place where more evil events occur - the organizing of the hunt for Pentheus and the slaughter enacted by the fierce lion.

The cave occurs four times in Prometheus Bound and is in each case a primitive dwelling. Prometheus himself is never associated directly with any of these caves; the closest parallels for him are the rock to which he is chained and his entombment at the end of the play. The cave in two instances in the play is that of Oceanos and his daughters, the Oceanids who comprise the chorus of the play. They visit Prometheus as he stands chained to the rock and, in fact, the Oceanids will support Prometheus to the end. The Oceanids are gods associated with nature and it is only fitting that they dwell in a natural setting such as a cave; there are other examples to indicate that this type of dwelling is common for sea creatures.⁷

The cave of the Oceanids first occurs in line 134: "For the sound of the crash of steel pervaded the depths of our cave, and it drove from me my quiet modesty. I hastened, without sandals, on my winged chariot." (133-135). The cave is located deep beneath the sea, yet the sound of Prometheus being bound to the rock has been discerned even at that depth. It is surprising that a chorus of unmarried maidens should dare to venture so far from their home, but the hammering has prompted them to act, putting aside their modesty, and to see why there is so much noise. They came with haste and this is perhaps an indication of the exceptional action taken against Prometheus, for the unaccustomed noise aroused their curiosity. Their father follows at line 284; Prometheus expresses wonder at Oceanos'

arrival: "What is this? Have you come also as a spectator of my troubles? How did you dare to leave both the stream named [after you] and the natural, rocky cave, to come to Scythia, the mother of iron?" (298-302). Oceanos is not known for his wanderings from home⁸ and it is a long journey from the depths of the sea to the cliff on which Prometheus is bound. There is a contrast here between Prometheus and Oceanos. The cave of Oceanos is a safe haven, deep beneath the sea and perhaps Prometheus' surprise is partly resentment because Oceanos is able to return to his cave whenever he wishes and, in fact, he will leave Prometheus at the end of the scene (396). The Oceanids, on the other hand, will stay with Prometheus to the end, shunning the safety of their home beneath the sea.

The third instance of the image of the cave in Prometheus Bound is in line 353. The cave is the place where Zeus has imprisoned Typho, a monster who dared to oppose the gods: "And I feel pity, seeing the earth-born inhabitant of Cilician caves, the dreadful monster, the hundred headed one, subdued by force, raging Typho. He once stood against all the gods, hissing terror from his fearful jaws, and hurling fierce-eyed lightnings from his eyes, that he might utterly destroy Zeus' tyranny by force. But there came from Zeus the sleepless bolt, breathing out flame from the descending thunderbolt, which shook him from his vaunting boasts." (351-361). Typho is held out by Prometheus as an example of Zeus' vengeance towards those who challenge the

gods. He is "the rebel incarnate, the rebel (unlike Prometheus) without a cause, save to overthrow the supreme ruler."⁹ Typho challenged Zeus and was defeated by the god; his punishment is burial in the Cilician cave. The cave is thus associated with opposition to order and to civilization, for Typho is a chthonic god and represents the displacement of Zeus in his turn. Prometheus uses the example of Typho as a reminder to Oceanos of the risks involved in challenging Zeus.¹⁰ Prometheus' own story differs from that of Typho because benefits accrue to man through Prometheus' challenge to Zeus. Yet, both oppose the rule of Zeus and what that represents¹¹ and both will suffer at the hands of Zeus, the one by imprisonment in a rocky cave, the other by entombment under a rocky cliff.

The final image of the cave occurs in a lengthy monologue by Prometheus in which he describes all of his gifts to mankind. It is perhaps the most important image of the cave in the play: "At first, having sight, [men] saw in vain; having hearing, they did not hear, but like the shapes of dreams, they lived their long lives, without purpose in all things, and they never knew brick-built houses facing the sun, nor how to work in wood, but they lived underground, like little ants, in the sunless chambers of caves." (447-453). Civilized (i.e. brick-built) shelter heads the list of the gifts which Prometheus gave man and so illustrates the importance he places on this achievement. The men who inhabited caves are compared to ants which swarm

in their holes. The analogy is clear; the caves of mankind were dark, scarcely better than holes in the ground, unpleasant places, for only the worst sort of life is possible without the warmth of the sun. The cave is also an uncivilized place, and indicates need and a primitive existence, a thing which Prometheus set out to change and for which he suffered. Shelter, as the first of his gifts to man, indicates that it is the most basic of the gifts: ". . . the ascending order . . . suggests an evolutionary sequence, as if each new art were discovered in response to the new needs of a higher level of civilization, once the needs at the lower, more pressing level had been met."¹² Man lived in caves until such time as Prometheus taught him a better way of life.

The image of the cave in Prometheus Bound has varied from the safe haven of the home of the Oceanids to the prison which houses Typho to the primitive dwellings of man before Prometheus enlightened him. The cave in each instance signifies an uncivilized place, a place where only a primitive existence can be eked out. The setting is natural, but it is not necessarily pleasant and, in fact, for Prometheus looking after mankind and for Typho in his prison, the cave offers only a restricted existence with few physical comforts.¹³

The cave occurs only six times in Aeschylus, yet it is a significant image, at least in Prometheus Bound. In all

cases, the image is of a primitive setting, often associated with the more cruel aspect of nature, that is, the fight for survival. In Eumenides, the cave belongs to creatures of the wild and is suggested by Apollo as a suitable place for the Furies to dwell. In Prometheus Bound, the cave is a comfortable home for Oceanos and his daughters, the Oceanids, a contrast to Prometheus' bleak existence on the cliff. It is the prison of Typho, a rebel who challenged Zeus and lost. And, finally, it is the primitive dwelling of early man before the gifts of Prometheus and, in this instance, serves to illustrate the importance of Prometheus' gifts, for he enhanced man's life by introducing him to a better form of housing. In each instance, the image has a primitive association, is uncivilized but with subtle differences of use. Although the image of the cave in Aeschylus is not as pronounced as in Sophocles and Euripides, it deserves mention because of its importance to the contexts in which it occurs.

AESCHYLUS

¹ B.H. Fowler, "Aeschylus' Imagery", *C&M* 28 (1968), pp. 12ff. The ten images in *Agamemnon* as identified by Fowler in the article are: robe, yoke, archer, wrestler, balance and whetstone, animal themes (eg. hunter/hunted), sickness and disease, ship, flower imagery (eg. blossom/branch), and darkness and light. All are involved, she says, with compulsion and restraint and they are all interconnected. See also R. Lattimore's translation of the *Oresteia* (1953), pages 16-17 for a discussion of 'idea' and 'symbol' in Aeschylus.

² For a complete definition of the terms 'image' and 'symbol' as used in this thesis, see pages 2-3 of the introduction.

³ For the purposes of this study, *Prometheus Bound* is considered Aeschylean. See M. Griffith, ed. *Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound* (1983), pages 31ff. for a complete discussion of the controversy.

⁴ N.G.L. Hammond, "The conditions of dramatic production to the death of Aeschylus", *GRBS* 13 (1972), pages 387ff.

⁵ A. Sidgewick, ed., *Aeschylus' Eumenides* (1892), page 5: "The Korykian cavern was a remarkable cave high up in Parnassus, seven miles from Delphi: the cavern contains two large chambers 100 and 200 feet long respectively: it was sacred to Pan and the nymphs."

⁶ All translations in the thesis are my own. The texts used are the Oxford Classical Texts.

⁷ Other sea creatures in Greek myth who lived in caves include Thetis and the Nereids (Homer, *Iliad*, 18.35ff, Hesiod, *Theogony*, 365) and Proteus (Homer, *Odyssey*, 4.403).

⁸ Griffith, page 143: "Prometheus is surprised at Ocean's arrival, partly because any spectator in this remote region would be unexpected, and because Ocean in particular is apparently not remarkable for his courage and independence. At Homer *Iliad* 20.7, at a gathering of the gods, only Ocean is absent, presumably because he is not free to leave his abode; so perhaps he was traditionally known as a lone and remote figure."

⁹ D.J. Conacher, Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound: A Literary Commentary (1980), page 45.

¹⁰ Griffith, page 149: "Prometheus reminds Ocean of the dangers involved in opposing Zeus, by referring to two relevant paradigms, his whole brother Atlas and half brother Typhos. Both offer highly visible examples of Zeus' power and ruthlessness, and both happen also to correspond to geographical phenomena familiar to the audience."

¹¹ Whether their opposition to Zeus is opposition to order and civilization or to tyranny depends upon one's interpretation of the play. See Griffith, page 7ff. for a discussion of this problem.

¹² Conacher, page 49.

¹³ There is one other reference to a cavern in this play which should not be confused with the image of the cave. In line 433, the chorus states that "the dark cavern of Hades under the earth roars" in response to Prometheus' suffering. The word used, *μυχός*, is also found in the description of the cave of the Oceanids and indicates the innermost chambers (as of the women's quarters in a house). However, since *μυχός* need not indicate a cave, and Hades is considered to encompass a much larger area than allowed by a cave, here it can only refer to the entire site of Hades, thought cavernous because it is beneath the earth.

III. SOPHOCLES

Sophocles' plays abound in symbolism.¹ The most commonly discussed symbols are the sword of Ajax and the bow of Philoctetes; other examples include the urn of Electra and the robe in the Trachiniae. Critics sometimes mention the cave as a symbol, particularly in Antigone, but often they overlook it in favour of more visible symbols.² Because of its frequency, the image of the cave justifies examination³; it will be examined with attention to its importance to both characterization and to plot, in Antigone, where it reflects the tragedy of the line of Oedipus, and particularly in Philoctetes, where it provides solace for the hero.

The image of the cave is important in Antigone for several reasons. First, it reflects the tragedy of the line of Oedipus with respect to life and death, for the cave will serve as Antigone's bridal chamber and her tomb. In this way, it is representative of what Antigone will miss by dying so young. The role as tomb is appropriate because Antigone is punished with imprisonment in the cave because she symbolically buried her brother Polyneices against the orders of Creon (388ff.). In its associations with death, the cave affects not only Antigone but also her betrothed, Haemon, and Haemon's mother, Eurydice, for what happens in the cave to Antigone will touch every character in the play,

in particular, Creon, Haemon's father.

The cave is first mentioned in line 774. Since Antigone has disobeyed his orders about leaving Polyneices unburied, Creon must now decide a suitable punishment for her. Haemon, Creon's son, has failed to dissuade his father from punishing Antigone; the king is adamant that she will pay for her crime: "I will hide her alive in a rocky cavern, where there is a track desolate of men, and place before her only such food as will avoid all pollution for the city" (773-777). Antigone's punishment is to be slow death, away from human contact but with enough sustenance to avoid the stigma of pollution for the city. The cave is part of this punishment because of its lack of the conveniences necessary for long survival. Creon chooses the cave because of its isolation; it is clear that he does not intend anyone to come to Antigone's aid in her suffering. In fact, Creon says that only Hades can bring help to Antigone in her imprisonment (778ff.); he suggests that she will learn her lesson, not about defying orders but about honouring the dead, and this lesson will come too late.

A few lines later, the cave emphasizes the tragedy of the line of Oedipus, for it becomes the place where Antigone will become part of the dead though she is still alive. The chorus has just sung an ode to love (781ff.) and is moved to pity at the sight of Antigone: "I can no longer check the streams of tears, when I see this girl, Antigone, reaching

the bridal chamber where all must sleep." (803-5). When she enters, Antigone is bound and guarded; she knows that she is being sent to her death: "But Hades who gives sleep to all leads me still alive to the banks of the Acheron, not with wedding songs, nor yet with anyone singing a hymn for me as bride, but I will marry Death." (810-818). Antigone describes herself as the bride of Death, lacking the accompaniments which are part of a normal bridal procession. The lament elicits some sympathy from the chorus, though they are cautious in their response to Antigone. They say that she has brought this punishment on herself (819f.), but their words "with honour and praise" (817, *κλεινὴ καὶ ἐπαινον*) suggest that they have pity for her fate. Antigone then mentions the cave as her "rock-barred prison", her "novel tomb" (847-9), a place where she will be "a foreigner among both the dead and the living." (850). These depictions of the cave echo the chorus' words at line 805 and reinforce the irony of Antigone in her imprisonment, a bride in her death chamber.

Creon shows no sign of relenting despite the sorrowful laments of Antigone, but he orders her to be taken as quickly as possible to her "cavern tomb" to be left alone "either to die, if she wishes, or to live entombed in such a home." (885-8). Creon's lack of compassion for the woman who is betrothed to his son shows an ignorance of the impact which this punishment will have on his family. He has already rejected Haemon's pleas that Antigone be spared and

is led only by the belief that her disobedience must be punished. Creon is careful to avoid pollution, stating that whatever happens to Antigone is not his responsibility (889-90), but it will soon become all too apparent to the king that in condemning Antigone, he has also condemned his own household.

Antigone's monody (891ff.) is a lamentation over the misfortunes of her short life. She addresses the cave as a tomb (891, *τύμβος*), a bridal chamber (891, *νυμφεῖον*) and her eternal home (891, *οἴκησις αἰεῖφρουρος*). These three depictions illustrate the roles that the cave will play in Antigone's life. The image of the cave as bridal chamber emphasizes what Antigone will miss by dying so young while, as a tomb, the cave becomes a more sinister place from which there can be no return.⁴ Antigone's only hope in dying so young is that she will be welcomed by the kin already in Hades (897ff.). She justifies the burial of her brother as a duty required to honour one who can never be replaced (910ff.). Her only regret is that she will not be able to fulfil her life as wife and mother (916ff.). Her earlier lament that she was going to marry Death (818) is here emphasized by regret that she is denied her true marriage song. Antigone is innocent of crime and believes that she has acted properly; she now repeats her earlier lament that she goes "living to the pit of the dead" (920). Not only is she denied the right of living out her life, she is also forced to endure a living death. The cave has a dual role

for Antigone here: it replaces the bridal chamber that Antigone will be denied and is her final resting place, though she is not yet dead. The associations of these two opposites give the cave a strange ambiance.

The chorus attempts to show Antigone that she is not the first to suffer imprisonment at the hands of a higher authority and, in doing so, hopes to offer some support to the girl. In the fourth stasimon, they adduce two parallels, both of which depend on the image of the cave for their effect: first, the story of Lycurgus and, second, the story of Cleopatra, daughter of Boreas. Lycurgus was imprisoned in a cave on Mount Pangaeus by the Edonians⁵ after he had been driven mad by Dionysus for trying to stop the Bacchanals in their frenzy. Cleopatra was imprisoned by her husband Phineus so that he could marry Idaea.⁶ Cleopatra is called "a child of the North Wind, raised in far-distant caves" (982-4). Though it is not expressly stated that Cleopatra is imprisoned in a cave, it is not only the imprisonment which is an important parallel for Antigone, but also the irony contained in the reference to the cave as a place where a child was raised. The chorus, in its attempt to reassure Antigone, chooses a parallel which contains a bitter reminder for Antigone of what she will never attain because of her imprisonment. Despite the chorus' attempts to reassure Antigone, there is no doubt that she views her imprisonment as a death sentence. Segal believes that "... burial in the isolated cave symbolically fulfils her own

violent rejection of her living kin and her devotion to death . . .".⁷ In fact, Antigone recognizes that there is no escape from death right from the beginning of the play (72) and she shows more concern with honouring the dead than with her own survival.

It is only much later in the play that the consequences of Antigone's imprisonment in the cave become clear to Creon. At first he considers the cave a suitable prison for one who has defied that law. Upon the arrival of Teiresias and the warning issued about deaths in Creon's family (1064f.), the king begins to reconsider his action. The chorus urges Creon to go and release Antigone "from her underground chamber" (1100), but this advice comes too late. The cave claims the life not only of Antigone but also of Creon's own son and indirectly, of his wife. Haemon kills himself when he discovers Antigone's body in the cave and when Eurydice has heard the report of his death from the messenger, she enters the palace and stabs herself. Creon now fully recognizes the folly of his actions because of what occurs in the cave; the cave has fulfilled the role set for it by Creon for Antigone, that is, a tomb, but with far reaching consequences. It is also the tomb of Haemon and Eurydice.

The Philoctetes is the other play of Sophocles in which a cave figures prominently. There has been some interest in the depiction on stage of this cave: of particular note are

articles by A.M. Dale and D.B. Robinson, which discuss whether both entrances to the cave would be visible to the audience.⁸ More important than the scenery, however, is the imagery of setting which is an integral part of the play. For a comprehensive discussion of the cave, the play can be divided into four sections according to the way in which the characters perceive the cave: first, there is the impression made on Odysseus and Neoptolemus when they discover the cave; secondly, there is the cave as shown to Neoptolemus by Philoctetes; thirdly, the cave becomes Philoctetes' only comfort when he has been betrayed by Neoptolemus; and, finally, there is the farewell to the cave when Philoctetes is integrated once again with his fellow man. Throughout the play, the cave provides support for Philoctetes, be it in the form of a simple shelter or as a sanctuary, an escape from deception; the primitiveness of the place, however, is a constant reminder of Philoctetes' deprivation. The cave has become Philoctetes' companion, along with the rest of the surroundings, for it has been his only solace in ten years of exile. The two depictions of the cave, then, in Philoctetes, complement each other: as primitive shelter, it becomes the only source of support for the hero.

The introductory scene has Neoptolemus and Odysseus scouting around the rocky terrain of Lemnos, looking for the cave where Odysseus had abandoned Philoctetes ten years earlier: "Look and see if there is a two-mouthed cave such as this: there are two places to sit - in the sun during the

cold weather, and when it's warm, a breeze blows through the tunneled cave and allows sleep." (16-19). That the cave is referred to by the description "with two entrances" (16, 19) affects the atmosphere of the scene, for Philoctetes could emerge from either entrance and surprise the two visitors before their plan of deception has been worked out; there is, therefore, a sense of urgency in the conversation between Odysseus and Neoptolemus. The word used of the cave in line 19, *αὐλῖον*, occurs again later in the play and always refers to a dwelling that is primitive, such as a stable.⁹ Once Neoptolemus has located the cave (27), he must determine whether Philoctetes still inhabits it. The description of the contents of the cave (a rough bed of leaves, a cup crudely made, and rags which have been used as bandages and are now drying in the sun, 33f.) leaves no doubt that he is still using the cave as a home. Odysseus mocks this meagre existence when he calls these items Philoctetes' "treasure" (37, *θησαύρισμα*); the objects reinforce the image of the cave as an uncivilized dwelling. Once Philoctetes' presence has been established, Odysseus describes his plan for deceiving Philoctetes and convinces Neoptolemus that he will be doing the right thing by helping him. He then exits and allows Neoptolemus to converse with his sailors, the men who comprise the chorus.

The cave is seen by these men as representative of the depravity of existence on a deserted island. Neoptolemus invites the chorus to look upon Philoctetes' dwelling

(159-60) and then explains what they are seeing: "You see here a house with a double entrance and his bed on the rocky ground". It is at this point that pity for Philoctetes' life is first introduced (169ff.). The chorus is appalled by the conditions which Philoctetes has been forced to endure and feels sorry for him in his loneliness: "He is wretched, always alone, always suffering . . ." (170). They go on to lament his downfall: "Perhaps this man is second to none, born of noble family, in life now lacking everything, he lies alone without others or with the dappled and shaggy beasts (as neighbours). . ." (180-185) To the chorus and Neoptolemus, Philoctetes is a wretched creature who suffers a terrible fate. To them, the cave with its few belongings represents the wretchedness of his existence.

Not only is the cave a primitive dwelling which evokes pity from the chorus, but as Philoctetes' only shelter for the last ten years, it is a constant reminder of his mistreatment by the Greeks. The hero enters at line 220 and once he has established Neoptolemus' identity, he begins to relate his misfortune of being abandoned on Lemnos. He says that the Greeks were "glad when they saw that I had fallen asleep in a rocky cave on shore" (271-2); they left him with a few rags and very little food (274-5). The cave is described here in simple terms as a "covered over rock" (*κατηρεφεῖ πέτρα*), in other words, a rock which is over-arching and so forms a cave.¹⁰ This description does not even attribute to the cave the distinction of being a

dwelling separate from the cliffs which surround it; rather, it is part of the rock from which it is made and is the most primitive sort of dwelling possible. Philoctetes further depicts the cave as his "small dwelling" (286) and says that with a roof for shelter and with fire, he has everything but freedom from pain (298-9). That Philoctetes is concerned only with survival illustrates the depth to which he has fallen; his desire for glory and honour as a hero has been overshadowed by a basic desire - to survive. The cave is a part of this survival, for it provides shelter for Philoctetes, yet in its primitiveness, it is also a reminder to him of what he is lacking.

Another aspect of the cave is revealed once Neoptolemus has agreed to take Philoctetes home, namely, the attachment which Philoctetes has to the place which he has called home for the last ten years. In his joy, Philoctetes insists on reverencing the place: "Let us go, boy, and do reverence to the earth within the home that is not a home, that you may learn how I lived, how I endured it with a strong spirit . . ." (533-5). This is the first indication of how devoted Philoctetes has become to the cave. It has been his companion for ten years and, when release from Lemnos seems imminent, Philoctetes can regard his isolated home with affection and take pride in displaying the conditions under which he has persevered. This action is interrupted by the arrival of the disguised sailor sent by Odysseus to hasten along the plans. Neoptolemus pretends that the plans to

return Philoctetes home are proceeding as before and tells Philoctetes to take from his cave what he needs (645). It is at this point that the bow is first introduced; the transfer of the bow from Philoctetes to Neoptolemus occurs a short while later when Philoctetes has a painful attack of his foot infection (732ff.). Neoptolemus refuses to leave Philoctetes on Lemnos despite the encouragement of the chorus and, in fact, informs Philoctetes of the entire plan after realizing that he cannot carry it through. Philoctetes reacts with horror (926ff.) and turns to what has been most familiar to him for so long - the surroundings, including the cave: "O harbours, o headlands, o hills teeming with wild creatures, o rugged rocks, I cry out to you, for I know no other to whom I can speak, and you have always been there . . ." (936-940). The surroundings have never deceived him, they have always shared his suffering and do so now again. At 952, Philoctetes addresses the cave directly: "O cave with two doors, once again I come to you, naked, without any means of sustenance. And I shall wither away in this cave, alone . . ." (952-4). The cave is personified at a time when Philoctetes no longer trusts Neoptolemus; once again, Philoctetes will be left alone, betrayed by a fellow Greek. This time, however, he is also without his bow, leaving him more vulnerable than before. The cave here replaces the human bond which has begun to grow between Philoctetes and Neoptolemus.¹¹ It is the cave which will share Philoctetes' final suffering in death, for now that his bow is gone, so too is his life.¹²

That the cave is a source of comfort to Philoctetes is aptly illustrated when it seems to Philoctetes that Neoptolemus and Odysseus will leave him, defenseless, on the island, for he turns again to the cave: "O cavern of hollow rock, warm and ice-cold, I was never destined to leave you though I am wretched, but you will be witness to my death as well. O wretched entranceway, continually filled with my cries of pain, what will my daily life be with you?" (1081-1090). As his shelter, the cave has provided the only solace for Philoctetes in the ten years on Lemnos and he expects that it will be his last resting place. But now, without the benefit of his bow, Philoctetes is uncertain what quality of life is left for him. That he is forced to turn to the cave for comfort illustrates the loneliness and desperation resulting from his exile (earlier seen in 184-5 and 285ff.). He has previously singled out the cave as worthy of respect (534f.) and as sharing in his suffering over the past ten years (936f.); now the cave will be witness to his death. He further associates the cave with his distress: "O wretched cave, continually filled with my cries of pain". The cave is a fellow sufferer, sharing in the pain of Philoctetes: "The personification of the cave as his daily companion is continued; it is as if it were infected with the λύπη exhaled from him, echoing his cries of pain . . . the personification culminates in *τάλαν*, echoing ὦ *τάλας* (1083) referring to Philoctetes himself."¹³ When Neoptolemus can offer no comfort to him because of the deception, Philoctetes turns to that which can bring him

comfort because of a sense of familiarity. "Philoctetes addresses the cave as if it were a living companion, long condemned to endure his presence."¹⁴ The cave has had a major role in the survival of Philoctetes over the last ten years and now, when the man finds himself abandoned by his fellow man once more, it is only natural that he should seek solace in the surroundings which have endured his suffering with him for so long. As if to emphasize for the chorus exactly what their abandonment of him will mean, Philoctetes repeats the despair of his isolation in lines 1100ff.: "O, I am wretched and broken by distress because I must live without any contact of men from now on, miserable, until I die here. Alas, alas, I can never obtain food - without my winged arrows in my strong hands." (1100-1110). The cave is the only thing Philoctetes has left, for he is without his bow and now has lost the final chance of the salvation of returning home. The shelter offered by the cave is the only comfort remaining for Philoctetes.

The final depiction of the cave in the play illustrates again the fondness which Philoctetes holds for the place which has been a source of comfort and shelter. Neoptolemus eventually decides to end the deceit and calls Philoctetes from his cave (1262) to return the bow, despite the objections of Odysseus. Once the two heroes are reconciled, Neoptolemus encourages Philoctetes to "come with me, when you have said goodbye to this land" (1408). They are stopped in this action by Heracles who tells the heroes that they

must go to Troy and thus fulfil Zeus' plans. Once Philoctetes has been convinced that he must go, the cave can be left behind without regret. It has served its purpose as shelter and fellow sufferer, yet there remains a fondness for the home of the past ten years. When Philoctetes addresses the cave for the last time (1452ff.), it is in the form of a fond farewell: "I call upon this land - Farewell, O home that has watched with me and nymphs of the stream and meadows and the mighty crash of the sea's headland. Often my head was made wet inside the cave by the spray carried by blasts of wind and often the Hermaean mountain sent me a sigh, echoing my own voice in my distress." Again the cave is personified, is considered as much a part of Philoctetes' life on Lemnos as the nymphs of the area and the sea. The farewell even accords to the cave the position of civilized house, reflected in the vocabulary (1453, μέγαθρον). As Segal points out, the cave has progressed from the 'rock' (16) with its few treasures to a civilized home.¹⁵ It is interesting that only when Philoctetes is about to depart from the island can he call the cave a "home". To this point, he has not distinguished it by using words other than those suited to a cave (e.g. line 272, πέτρα; line 1081, γύαλον; lines 954/1087/1149, αὔλιον). But there is great emotion in these closing lines of the play. The cave has meant something special to Philoctetes and he is sad to be leaving. "To leave the scene even of desolation and agony may be a poignant thing, and the emotions of Philoctetes as he apostrophizes . . . are deep and complex."¹⁶ Though his

ten years on Lemnos were not happy ones, it is difficult to leave behind a place that has become so familiar.

The cave is an important feature of the Philoctetes. Although only a simple shelter, it offers Philoctetes comfort through the ten years that he is alone on Lemnos, a fact that is emphasized by the personification of the cave when Philoctetes is betrayed by man. There is a bond between the man and the cave, though it may be simply the seeking of comfort by the man in surroundings which are familiar to him.

Sophocles has skillfully used the cave in both Antigone and Philoctetes to enhance the dramatic effect of the plays. In Antigone, the cave not only functions as the eternal resting place for Antigone, but is also described as her "bridal chamber". The ironic associations of death and marriage as united in the cave anticipate the tragic outcome of Antigone's attempts to bury her brother. In Philoctetes, the cave provides shelter for the hero, though of a most primitive type, as well as providing comfort for him when he feels betrayed by Neoptolemus. In both plays, the feeling created by the cave is one of futility - for Antigone, because she knows she will die in the cave and for Philoctetes, because until the very end of the play, he too seems fated to end his days in the cave. The cave also illustrates the determination of the characters: it shows Antigone's commitment to die for what she believes is right

and Philoctetes' commitment to endure physical and emotional deprivation to avoid compromising his honour.

SOPHOCLES

¹ See pages 2-3 of the introduction for a complete definition of 'image' and 'symbol' as used in this thesis.

² C. Segal, "Visual symbolism and visual effects in Sophocles", CW 74 (1980), page 126. For a discussion of the cave in Antigone, see C. Segal, "Sophocles' Antigone: the house and the cave", RCCM 20 (1978), pages 1171-1188.

³ The symbol of the cave appears in six of the seven extant plays, though it is prominent in only two of them, Antigone and Philoctetes. The only play in which no cave appears is the Trachiniae. Sophocles uses a variety of words to describe the cave, showing greater variation than either Aeschylus or Euripides. Words for a cave proper occur 26 times, a remarkable increase over Aeschylus, particularly considering that the two tragedians are near contemporaries.

⁴ The cave is often seen as a bridal chamber in Greek mythology. Examples of this include Aphrodite and Anchises, Zeus and Maia, and Endymion and Artemis. The resonance provided by these other examples add poignancy to Antigone's lament because for them, the marriage is more than simply the word.

⁵ R.C. Jebb, ed. Sophocles' Antigone (1902), page 187. See also Apollodorus 3.5.1 for a different version of the myth.

⁶ The complete story is related in Diodorus Siculus, 4.43.3.

⁷ Segal, "Sophocles' Antigone: the house and cave", page 1177.

⁸ A.M. Dale, "Seen and unseen on the Greek stage: a study in scenic conventions", Wiener Studien 69 (1956), pp. 96-106 and D. Robinson, "Topics in Sophocles' Philoctetes", CQ 63 (1969), pp. 34-56.

⁹ J.C. Kamerbeek, ed. The Plays of Sophocles: Part IV Philoctetes (commentaries) (1980), page 30.

¹⁰ R.C. Jebb, ed. Sophocles' Philoctetes (1898), page 53.

¹¹ D. Seale, Vision and Stagecraft in Sophocles (1982), page 26: "Philoctetes addresses his natural surroundings directly, personalizes them in a way which forges an intimate bond between himself and the place which he has been forced to make his home."

¹² There seems to be a play on βίος throughout this play. Editors have disagreed on whether this "pun" is meant to be taken seriously, but it would appear that the bow (βίος) is indeed Philoctetes' life (βίος) for without one, the other soon suffers.

¹³ Kamerbeek, page 150.

¹⁴ Jebb, page 172.

¹⁵ Segal, Tragedy and Civilization, page 360.

¹⁶ R.P. Winnington-Ingram, Sophocles: An Interpretation, page 301.

IV. EURIPIDES

Euripides has been criticized by scholars for his lack of attention to imagery.

¹ He prefers instead to rely on the plots of his tragedies to hold the audience's attention, and he adds unexpected twists to the action in order to achieve this effect. When he makes use of images, they are most often enhancements to the plot and not central to the action of the play. An example of this use of imagery would be the broom which Ion uses in the play of the same name; although it represents his status as "caretaker" of the temple of Apollo, it is not an indispensable prop and could easily be omitted. Barlow describes a number of other images that are found in Euripides' plays. These include bees, birds, clouds, dogs, trees, snakes and walls.² Yet, in almost every instance, the image seems incidental, and not critical to an interpretation of the play. While specific images might be incidental, imagery of setting is of prime importance in Euripides' work, and the cave is included in this area of imagery.

Setting in Euripides often has an influence on the manner in which the action unfolds:

"Setting is a clue to understanding a particular event or action, and imagery of place perhaps assumes the importance it does in his dramas

because, more than any other ancient poet, he grasped and explored the significance of environment as an operating factor in human behaviour. Even in the smallest details, and in lyrics of an apparently decorative kind, it is from the described surroundings that one can judge the way in which an action is to be interpreted. These establish the precise shade of tone and mood."³

While the prologue is the common vehicle for establishing this sense of mood through setting, sometimes certain images of setting pervade a play and are constantly evoked as the action unfolds. Examples of this type of image would include the sea in Iphigenia at Taurus, the mountains in the Bacchae, and the most important for this study, the cave in Ion.⁴

Caves occur in several of Euripides' plays, and, as in Aeschylus and Sophocles, they often are associated with primitive settings. Examples of caves include the caves of the serpents in Phoenician Women, the cave of the Curetes where Zeus was born in Bacchae, and the cave in which Menelaus hides the phantom Helen upon his arrival in Egypt in Helen. Yet, only in the Ion does the cave assume the importance of a symbol, as opposed to simply being an image.⁵ The cave achieves this status by being the place where the rape of Creusa by Apollo and the subsequent exposure of the baby Ion occurred. The cave, at least in Creusa's mind, comes to stand for the actions which have

caused her so much pain throughout the years, and thus it functions beyond the level of image and becomes a symbol of Creusa's sufferings: "Although this environment was a locale for Apollo's action (the rape) as well as Kreousa's, it is charged with strong emotions only for the human woman of earth-born--descent: it involves for her the mixture of horror and awe associated with the rape, the turmoil of the lonely birth and the misery of her infant's exposure."⁶ The events which occurred in the cave affect the way in which Creusa reacts to the action of the play, and mention of the cave only serves to remind her of what she had done in the past and of the price she continues to pay for this action. In fact, though Creusa has come to Delphi ostensibly to inquire about her childlessness, she also has come to confront Apollo for what she perceives is the wrong done to her by him.⁷

Creusa repeats the story of the rape several times⁸; each recounting of the story is a slightly different version, and it is in the recognition scene that there finally emerges what would appear to be the truthful version. Through these recitals of the past the cave is brought forward, and the audience is not allowed to ignore the importance of these past actions to the events which occur in the play.⁹ In fact, it is almost always the cave which is first mentioned in Creusa's recitals of the rape and not the rape itself, a fact which gives prominence to the location and shows that, to Creusa, the rape is

inseparable from the place in which it occurred.¹⁰

The first mention of the cave occurs in the prologue at line 10ff. While introducing the scene for the audience Hermes recounts the rape of Creusa by Apollo and the subsequent secret birth of the baby: ". . . Phoebus joined in marriage the child of Erechtheus, Creusa, by force, in that place below the hill in the land of the Athenians, near the north facing rocks of Pallas which the Attic lords call the Long Rocks. Unknown to her father - for this was the god's plan - she carried to term the child in her. When the time came, Creusa gave birth in the house and she took the newborn baby back to the same cave where she had lain with the god, and exposed him to die in a hollow cradle" (lines 10-19). The story of Creusa's rape is related with little emotion by Hermes. That she should be able to carry the baby without being discovered by her parents is attributed to the wish of Apollo, who protected Creusa from scandal. The birth of the baby in Hermes' version takes place in the house; later, Creusa describes the event as taking place in the same cave in which he was conceived (949). After his birth, the baby is exposed in the cave and left to die. There is an irony about this action, though; for Creusa leaves tokens (26) with the baby in case he should be rescued.¹¹ The imagery of setting gives dramatic importance to the cave in these introductory lines; it is the focal point around which the action of the past has taken place. For Creusa, it is a place fraught with

unpleasant memories, for the action of Apollo occurred against her will (according to Hermes) and she had to leave her son there as prey for the beasts; now, years later, she finds herself childless and feels great animosity toward the god whom she blames for all her troubles. This feeling will provide Creusa with motivation for her actions throughout the rest of the play.

For Creusa to expose Ion in a cave is a logical action for the young woman to take, for, according to custom, the baby could not be exposed within the city walls,¹² That Creusa should choose the same cave in which she was raped is curious; several times in the play, it is made clear that it was Apollo's will that the child was saved and raised by the Pythia at Delphi (47-8; 311; 1357ff.). This rescue of Ion suggests that the action taken by Creusa in exposing the baby was part of a greater plan contrived by Apollo to see his son grow to maturity. The desolate nature of the location of the cave, while providing a suitable place for Apollo to take Creusa, would have meant certain death for Ion had it not been for the god's intervention. Throughout the play, Creusa assumes that her son has been killed by wild beasts, a fact which makes the action of the play more poignant.

The cave is next mentioned in the stichomythia between Ion and Creusa (288). He is amazed at her sadness in viewing the shrine at Delphi and inquires as to the cause of her

tears (246). Creusa responds: "Seeing this temple of Apollo, I measured an old memory. Though I stand here, my mind is elsewhere." (249-51). Standing before the temple of the god who is the cause of her misfortune overwhelms Creusa, for she is reminded once more of the past. When Ion discovers that Creusa is a descendant of Erichthonius, he asks her if she is familiar with the Long Rocks, a place which is sacred to Apollo. Creusa's response - "Why do you ask this? You remind me of something . . . How I wish I had never seen it." (284-286) - shows the effect that even the mention of the cave has on her. Ion's question is innocent, for he inquires only out of curiosity about another of Apollo's sacred areas; Creusa's reaction indicates that there is more to the Long Rocks than she is telling. In order to uncover the rest of the story, Ion questions Creusa why she "hates a place so much loved by the god" (287), but he receives only the answer that she "knows of certain shame associated with the cave . . ." (288) and then he abandons his inquiry about the place. Instead, he asks Creusa her reasons for coming to Delphi. It is only when Ion relates his own story of abandonment that Creusa decides to tell the story of her "friend" who suffered unjustly at the hands of Apollo: "Another woman suffered the same things as your mother . . . a friend of mine says Apollo was her lover . . . and she bore the child of the god, unknown to her father . . . she suffers, wretched, for she put out from the house the child which she bore." (330-344, *passim*). That Apollo could be so heartless is a blow to Ion and he attempts to rationalize

this information by suggesting that the woman simply wished to avoid the shame of admitting her mortal lover. But when Creusa relates the fate of the baby - killed by wild beasts - and the woman's childlessness, Ion expresses sympathy for the woman, calling Apollo unjust (335). Yet he is still unwilling to believe that the god who has been so kind to him could have done such a thing and suggests that perhaps Apollo raised the child secretly (337). To Creusa, that is just another injustice against the woman, for while the god has the knowledge that the child is safe, the mother suffers at his expense in ignorance of the fate of her child.

The story is repeated a third time by the chorus: "O Pan, in your sunless caves, where some maiden, unhappy, bore a child to Phoebus, and exposed it, prey for birds and wild beasts, shame of a bitter marriage." (501-5). This is the first time that the cave in which the rape occurred is identified by name¹³; the story is the same as Creusa's, but again, without names being given. The ambiance of the cave is sombre, for it is "sunless" (500, ἀναλίοις) and associated with an act which causes misery. It becomes clearer through this description by the chorus why the earlier mention of the cave (288) evoked a negative response from Creusa, for the place has been associated only with unhappiness for her.

The next retelling of the story occurs in lines 881ff. The chorus has assured Creusa that it will support her in

her bid to have the "new son" of Xuthus killed and, in order to bolster her own justification for this murder, Creusa relates her story to them:

"O son of Latona, in the light of day, I will proclaim the blame as yours. With your hair flashing gold, you came to me when, in the valley, I was gathering in my cloak yellow flowers, which cast a golden light. And you took hold of my white wrists and led me, crying out for my mother, to a hollow cave, you, a god and a lover, celebrating Aphrodite without shame. And, wretched, I bore you a son. In fear of my mother, I placed him in your bed, where you joined with me, the wretched, unhappy girl in that unhappy bed. Alas, now he is lost, snatched away as food for birds, my son - and yours, wretch. But meanwhile, you play your lyre and sing your chants." (885-906)

The description of the manner in which Apollo came to Creusa contrasts with the violence of the act which occurred.¹⁴ Creusa could not escape Apollo, and her cries for help went unheard because of the desolateness of the place. Creusa describes herself as "wretched" (899) at the birth of the baby and the exposure of the baby in the cave where the god had forced her. She laments the death of the baby and accuses the god of not caring, of being indifferent to his son's fate. The desolation of the cave increases the agony which Creusa feels as a result of the actions which are associated with it, for the wildness of the place not only

makes the rape seen even more vile, but also seems to assure the death of the baby. No one could come to the aid of either of the innocent victims, or so Creusa thought. The events torment Creusa even as she uses them as justification for committing murder against her husband's new found son.¹⁵

The repetition of the story to the old man occurs in lines 936ff. where again the cave is seen as a symbol of Creusa's suffering. Although he was present for the story as Creusa told it to the chorus, he requests to hear it again in greater detail. Creusa first identifies the site as "the cave north of Cecrops' hill, which we call Long Rocks." (936) She goes on to explain clearly that "I joined with Phoebus in a wretched union, against my will" (941) and that she bore a baby "alone, in the same cave where I joined with Apollo" (949), a baby which she thinks is now dead, killed by beasts (951). The old man responds with incredulity that Creusa could abandon her own child in such a place, but attributes the greater share of the blame to Apollo himself (960). Creusa finally admits that the reason she exposed the baby in the cave was hope that "the god would save his own son" (965), yet throughout the play, Creusa never lets herself believe that the baby ever was saved from the cave. The entire scene with the old man is contrived to elicit an even greater sympathy for Creusa's suffering and to make the planned murder of Ion more palatable. The cave enhances the dramatic effect of this passage, for its wildness adds to Creusa's suffering: no one came to her rescue during the

rape, and she cannot conceive of anyone coming to the rescue of her infant son either.

The final account of the story occurs in the recognition scene (1397ff.): "No more silence - do not warn me. For I see the cradle in which I once placed . . . you, my son, when still a baby, a newborn, in the cave of Cecrops and the rock-vaulted Long Rocks. I will leave this altar [to embrace you], even if I must die." (1397-1401).¹⁶ At this point, she even is willing to risk death to embrace Ion as her son. In lines 1467ff. the story is repeated for Ion and for the first time, he learns who his father really is: "Where the olive planted hill sits on the headlands and the nightingale sings on the rocks, I was loved by Apollo in a hidden bed . . . In the tenth month, I bore you, the unknown child of Apollo . . . Out of fear of my mother, I covered you with swaddling clothes, [decorated with] the careless work of the loom. I did not offer you the milk of a mother's breast nor did I wash you with my hands, but I cast you out in the desolate cave as a feast for birds of prey, destined for Hades." (1480-1497, *passim*). The story is now bitter-sweet, for while the horror of the act of rape and the abandonment of the baby still remains, Creusa realizes that the reunion with her son is as much a part of Apollo's plan as was her choice of place for the baby's exposure. For his part, Ion is still reluctant to believe Apollo could be so callous in his relationships that he could have allowed him to be exposed in a deserted cave. He attempts to

persuade Creusa to tell the truth about her lover (1523ff.), and it is only upon the appearance of Athena at the end of the play that Ion is convinced that he is truly the son of Apollo. It is at this point that the irony of certain of Ion's statements in the play becomes clear; he referred to himself as "Apollo's" (311), and he has called Apollo "father" (136) as well as the one who "gives me life" (182; 1373). Life in the temple has been good to Ion and he has revered the Long Rocks as a place sacred to Apollo without ever realizing the importance of the Long Rocks to him. It is now revealed to be his place of birth, and the cave takes on this additional importance for the young man.

The cave in which the events of Creusa's youth occurred is kept in the forefront throughout the entire play. The story is told six times and each time more information about the incident is revealed. The rape, birth, and exposure are slowly revealed in the different versions; only once does Creusa allow herself to admit that she has hoped that Apollo would look after the baby and not let it perish (965). By the end of the play Creusa has held back nothing, though it is only upon recognizing Ion that her pain about what happened in the cave is alleviated. Creusa came to Delphi as part of Apollo's plan, but she intended to seek revenge against a god who had betrayed her; she is compelled to attempt murder because of what happened in the past; she is willing to risk death at the end in order to embrace the son she had thought was dead. The cave is an ambiguous image in

this play, for on the surface it is associated with the violent act of rape and the death of a young child; in reality, the death never occurred and the rape of Creusa will prove to be an act that will bring much recognition and glory to her homeland.¹⁷

The cave is an important image throughout the Ion. It becomes synonymous in the mind of Creusa with the rape by Apollo and the subsequent exposure of the baby; its primitiveness adds to the unpleasantness of these actions, for there is no escape from the desolation of such a place. Creusa relates the story of the rape several times, with the final version as told to Ion the most complete. For Creusa, the cave is associated with unpleasant memories which are only mitigated after the discovery that her son is not dead. For Ion, the cave is a place sacred to Apollo and therefore he worships it; after the recognition scene, he also reveres it as his birth place. Since Creusa is the only person at the beginning of the play to associate shame with the cave, even the mention of the cave distresses her; the use of the cave to remind her of what happened in it proves to be the beginning of the revelation of her story. In Creusa's unfolding of the story, the cave becomes inseparable from the acts which occurred in it; while it retains the fundamental nature of a place which is primitive and desolate, the cave takes on additional significance for Creusa, bringing back unpleasant memories but allowing her to purge herself of what she had suffered in that place.

EURIPIDES

¹ S. Barlow, The Imagery of Euripides (1971), pages 3ff. contains a discussion of the criticism levelled at Euripides for his lack of imagery and Barlow's response to this criticism.

² Barlow, page 168 (index entry under "imagery").

³ Barlow, pages 18-19.

⁴ C. Collard, Euripides (1981), page 27: "Images become thematic in a play, like the sea in Iphigenia in Taurus or the mountains in Bacchae: thus ocean, woodland, and meadow pervade Hippolytus in the longings and experience of Phaedra and Hippolytus . . .".

⁵ For the definition of 'image' and 'symbol' as used in this thesis, see pages 2-3 of the introduction.

⁶ D.J. Mastronarde, "Iconography and imagery in Euripides' Ion", CSCA 8 (1975), page 168.

⁷ A.P. Burnett, Catastrophe Survived (1971), page 104: "[Creusa] has come to Delphi . . . half intending to confront the god with his injustice."

⁸ A.S. Owen, ed., Euripides' Ion (1939), page 69: "The story of the exposure is narrated five times: in the prologue (10ff.), in Creusa's tale to Ion about her pretended friend (288ff.), in her monody (885ff.), in her dialogue with the old retainer (936ff.), and in her revelation to Ion (1397ff.). In 949 Creusa says that she gave birth to the child in the cave where she had met Apollo, but that may have been to make her tale to the old man more pathetic. She does not always adhere strictly to the truth." In actuality, the story is repeated six times; Owen omits the chorus' recital in lines 491ff.

⁹ C. Wolff, "The design and myth in Euripides' Ion", HSCP 69 (1965), page 173: "The setting of Apollo's encounter with Creusa, the landscape at the edges of the Acropolis, the Steep Rocks, the hill and the cave of Cecrops (936, 1400), the cave and probably later shrine of Apollo (283f.), a cave and altar of Pan (490ff., 938) all are continually evoked."

¹⁰ Creusa relates the story herself at lines 881ff., 936ff., and 1397ff. In the latter two, she introduces the cave immediately as an integral part of the story. At 881, she first describes Apollo coming to her in the field - again emphasizing the importance of setting - and then the cave is brought in as the location of the actual rape.

¹¹ A.P. Burnett, trans., Euripides' Ion (1970), page 25: "Creusa is here made to show a very realistic ambiguity of expectation; the child is left to die (18, 27, 1494) yet provided with tokens . . .".

¹² Editors have expended much effort on identifying the exact cave in which these events took place. The consensus is that the cave is located at the "base of the cliffs at the northwest corner of the Acropolis", A.W. Verrall, ed., The Ion of Euripides (1890), page 5. This cave would be a desolate place, suitable for the exposure of a child: "The ritual purity of the city was safeguarded from the danger of unburied corpses by leaving the child outside the city walls (as the cave of Pan was, in relation to the primitive city on top of the Acropolis)." (Burnett, EI, page 24).

¹³ Burnett, EI, page 61: " . . . against the civilized ancestral halls of the first part of its song, the Chorus now sets the extra-city wildness of the bastard's place of exposure. This is the first time that the cave of Pan has been specified as the scene of Ion's begetting and abandonment, but from this point on it is regularly referred to, though at 1400 Creusa changes the owner of the place and makes it the 'Cecropid' cave."

¹⁴ Wolff, page 181: "[Creusa's] feeling (of hatred for Apollo) seems dissolved by the beauty of the images which accompany it." I prefer to consider the scene as a contrast with the brutality of the rape which occurs. Creusa is very angry with Apollo at this point in the play and there can be no question of her feelings softening because of a pleasant description of setting.

¹⁵ Burnett, CS, page 113: "[Creusa] reports the death of her own son as if it were a verifiable fact, and finds in that long-ago death a new and absolute reason for a present killing. It is simply a matter of repayment: with ironic accuracy, she equates the new son, given to her husband, with the old son who was taken from her, and finds that the present gift makes the past robbery doubly reprehensible."

16 Contrary to the rejection of this line by C.S. Jerram (Euripides' Ion, 1896, page 90) and Verrall (page 114), because of the change of the name of the cave, Owen (page 166) states that "we can only keep it by supposing that as (936) was used of the whole line of cliffs, so the cave of Cecrops might be any cave in them." Creusa does not alter the events themselves and the cave remains an integral part of the story.

17 There are other references to caves in Ion. The cave of Trophonius is mentioned in line 394. Trophonius was a minor deity who had a shrine on the slope below Delphi; anyone seeking advice from Delphi would also visit the shrine of Trophonius. If the same advice was given by both, it signified good omens. Xuthus has gone to the cave of Trophonius to ask about the childlessness. It is while he is absent from Delphi that Creusa is able to talk with Ion and tell him the story of her "friend". For further information, see F.A. Paley, The Ion of Euripides (1891), Cambridge University Press, page 69f.

V. CONCLUSION

The cave in Greek tragedy is a little-studied image. Although many scholars have commented on the depiction of the cave as scenery for individual plays, there has been no comparative study done of the three tragedians - Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides - to identify whether the cave develops from an image to a symbol and whether, as an image, it has a significant function in the plays or is merely decorative. The purpose of this thesis was to examine the image of the cave with these questions in mind.

The terms "image" and "symbol" for the purpose of this thesis were defined as follows: an image is considered as a sensation produced in the mind by something in the physical world, usually something concrete as opposed to something abstract. If the same image occurs in different contexts in the same play, it assumes additional significance by connecting these contexts. A symbol indicates something in the play which stands for something else, and it links the image and the idea which the image suggests. If the same image is found in different contexts in the same play and allows an interpretation which is more than simply literal, it can be termed a symbol.¹

Although the image of the cave is found in several tragedies of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, it does not

have any special function except in three of the plays studied in this thesis: Sophocles' Antigone and Philoctetes and Euripides' Ion. In the other plays in which it occurs, the cave does not evoke any further response than the literal; that is, the cave refers to a dwelling, primitive in nature, that does not represent anything other than what it appears to be. This does not mean that the image of the cave cannot have some "symbolic" qualities in other plays such as in Aeschylus' Prometheus Bound, where it clearly has connotations important to the context. But the image of the cave in Aeschylus does not achieve the dramatic significance of the caves in Sophocles and Euripides.

The image of the cave is consistent in the playwrights as a primitive shelter; it is a wild place, desolate. But each author attributes different aspects to this image and as a result, the cave varies in importance and dramatic function from play to play. Imagery of setting is especially important to Sophocles and Euripides; for they allow the setting to enhance the action of the play²; the cave in the three plays studied becomes a part of this enhancement. In them, the cave has certain additional significance beyond the simple primitiveness seen in Aeschylus and the individual perceptions of the cave often affect the way the characters react.

In Aeschylus, the cave occurs only twice in Eumenides and four times in Prometheus Bound; in each instance, this

image of primitive shelter is borne out by the context. The caves are those of wild animals or of primitive creatures, of man before he is given the gifts by Prometheus. But there is no indication that these caves, taken together, mean anything other than this uncivilized, wild shelter; yet it is for this reason that the image of the cave is effective. A cave represents the basic form of shelter and it is used by Aeschylus to emphasize the fundamental level of existence: every character involved with the cave is in some way associated with the wild: the Oceanids, Typho, primitive man. The image of the cave fits in well with this primitive lifestyle.

It is in the plays of the other two tragedians, Sophocles and Euripides, that we see most clearly image and context affecting one another and allowing the image to advance beyond the literal. The cave in Antigone, Philoctetes and Ion must be seen as an image which enhances the plot and becomes more than decorative by doing so. In Antigone, the cave at first seems to be little more than the prison which will house the girl. Yet, as the action of the play unfolds, the cave has a profound effect not only on Antigone, but also on Creon, who initially believes that he is doing the right thing in imprisoning Antigone in the cave and only later realizes that he has condemned his own family to suffer because of her punishment.

In Philoctetes, the cave has a certain impact on the young Neoptolemus and this impression is enhanced by his interaction with Philoctetes. He feels pity for the older man at the style of life he has been forced to endure and the cave is representative of this lifestyle. Yet the cave also takes on the role of sole comfort for Philoctetes when Neoptolemus betrays him and it is through this turn of events that the cave is shown to be an important part of Philoctetes' survival on Lemnos.

Reciprocity is also seen in Ion, in which the very mention of the cave where Creusa was raped is enough to cause her to become uncomfortable. In its association with the rape and subsequent exposure of the baby, the cave serves as a painful reminder to Creusa of these events; she is resentful and seeks revenge for the earlier wrong done. The image of the cave enhances the unfolding of the plot by providing a greater impetus for Creusa's actions.

The image of the cave is important in the three plays mentioned above. In each, it takes on a slightly different meaning, although there is always the underlying sense of primitiveness. Though this primitiveness is also important to the image of the cave in Prometheus Bound, in that play, there is nothing beyond this basic meaning which would allow the image to have a greater dramatic effect. In Antigone, the cave is described as a tomb and as a bridal chamber; it is the place which will be Antigone's eternal home. It



causes Antigone to reflect on what she will be missing by dying so young and illustrates the tragedy of the line of Oedipus, a line which suffers in both life and death. Antigone's prison is a sombre place, for she will be a living being among the dead; it becomes a tomb, not only for her, but also for two others before the end of the play. The cave has an intense effect on Creon, because of the actions which occur in it; he initially regards it as a suitable prison, only to realize at the end of the play that he has condemned his own family by his actions. In this way, the cave becomes more than the simple shelter of the Aeschylean plays: it represents the lost life of Antigone and the accursed nature of that entire family line.

The Philoctetes illustrates the use of the cave at its basic level - primitive shelter - but, to the hero, the cave is also a source of comfort in his exile from the Greeks. It provides shelter for him and houses his few treasures, but when the hero is deceived by Neoptolemus, the cave is all that Philoctetes has left in his misery. His bow is gone and with it, his means of support; Philoctetes, treating the cave as a companion, expresses sadness at the prospect of dying alone in the cave which has suffered with him for the past ten years. Once Neoptolemus has been reconciled with Philoctetes through the intervention of Heracles, the cave can be left but not without a fond farewell. The cave has not only had the distinction of providing shelter for Philoctetes but also of providing solace for him throughout

his exile. In this way the image of the cave has significance beyond the role of simple shelter; it evokes a certain response from each of the characters, revealing something of themselves and adding to the interaction of the characters, especially with respect to the deception and eventual reconciliation.

In Ion, the cave is regarded by Creusa as synonymous with the rape and exposure of the baby boy which occurred so many years earlier. In this respect it becomes associated with her suffering and the torment which has been a part of her life since that time, for each time the place is mentioned feelings of resentment and sorrow are evoked. The cave is a suitable choice for Apollo's rape of Creusa and the subsequent exposure of the child because, like Antigone's cave-prison, it is away from civilization and, in this case, is also a place sacred to the gods. Now when Creusa has come with her husband to Delphi, she is anxious to avenge the wrong she felt has been committed against her by Apollo, but it is the mention of the cave by Ion which reminds her of how painful the old memories are and provides additional impetus for her revenge. The cave is, for Creusa, a sinister image and it is only at the very end when she is reunited with Ion that the entire plan of the exposure falls into place. Again, the image of the cave, though retaining its fundamental nature, has additional meaning for the central characters - one consciously, one unconsciously.

The cave in fifth century Greek tragedy retains an image of primitiveness. This perception remains even when additional significance is added to the cave as in three of the plays discussed. The variation of the image in Antigone, Philoctetes, and Ion ranges from the cave which becomes Antigone's bridal chamber and tomb to the cave in which Philoctetes finds shelter and comfort to a place associated with a sinister event which changed a young woman's life. Imagery of setting is especially important to Sophocles and Euripides and it is in these two authors that the cave has a greater dramatic effect. Previous studies on imagery in Greek tragedy have rarely considered the cave despite its place in the tradition of Greek mythology. Although the cave is sometimes mentioned in studies of imagery, it is as a peripheral image, one that is summarily dismissed. The purpose of this thesis was to bring the cave into focus in Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. Any comparative study of imagery, especially of imagery of setting, in the three tragedians must now consider the cave. Further analysis could be done on the cave as a symbol for the womb and the application to feminist theory. A more complete study which analyses the cave in later Greek literature would also be beneficial. This thesis has shown that by looking at the occurrences of the cave and its import in the tragedies, the image of the cave is functional rather than decorative. It should therefore be given more prominence in the study of imagery in Greek tragedy.

CONCLUSION

¹ Paraphrased from The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics (1974), edited by A. Preminger, entries on imagery and symbolism.

² The 'Spectacle' of tragedy is downplayed in Aristotle's Poetics (14); he considers that emotions such as fear and pity can be aroused by the action of the play as well as by the 'Spectacle'. In considering the cave, only in Philoctetes would there be a visible image for the audience; in all three plays discussed in this thesis, it is the idea of the cave which adds dramatic effect, making the imagery of setting so important in its enhancement of the play.

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